

The big bad wolf

Michigan Opera Theatre members bring children's tale to life

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Little Red Riding Hood brought an important message along with music to a recent program at Alameda Early Childhood Center.

Three members of the Michigan Opera Theatre recently performed an adaptation of the famous children's story that really connected with the kids.

"Even the 3-year-olds sat spellbound," said Helene Blackman, principal at Alameda, which has students attending pre-school through second grade.

Blackman added that children "loved the story, the music. And the scenery and costumes were wonderful. There was a lot of action."

The two 45-minute performances of "Little Red Riding Hood" were arranged by Alameda parent Amy Malaney, an MOT professional singer, who portrayed Little Red, Malaney's daughter, Maggie, attends kindergarten at the Farmington district school.

"I love doing this children's stuff," Malaney commented. "I just feel like I'm making a difference."

Joining them in the multi-purpose room were two other MOT members: Mark Vondrak, "The Wolf," and Barbara Wiltzie, in the dual roles of mother and grandmother.

Malaney said the trio does a number of performances at schools each year, giving youngsters a good introduction to opera and — in the case of "Little Red Riding Hood" — an important message.

"Little Red has a big message of not talking to strangers," Malaney explained. "And at Alameda, with such young kids, we really try to pound that message home."

The key for kids to remember is when somebody calls their name, that they actually know the person, Malaney said.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DIEHLER

Oh, oh: Upper right, Red Riding Hood (Amy Malaney) disobeys her mother by speaking to a stranger, the wolf (Mark Vondrak). Above, The wolf has a main course and dessert on his mind. Little Red Riding Hood and grandmother (Barbara Wiltzie) are scared, but try to figure out how to outwit their fanged nemesis.



Wow! Above, Matthew Brisker and Kevin Lapinski enjoy the opera. At left, Little Red Riding Hood thinks she'll stop to pick strawberries on the way to grandmother's.

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